

Senate Bill 380  
April 16, 2013  
Presented by Hank Worsch  
House Fish, Wildlife & Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Hank Worsch, License Bureau Chief, for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here on behalf of Director Hagener in opposition of Senate Bill 380.

SB 380 will create up to 1,500 restricted B-10 nonresident big game combination licenses that are valid only in identified wilderness areas, 1,200 for the first two years and then 1,500 beginning in March 2015. These licenses will be sold for the fee of \$824 plus the \$10 hunting access enhancement fee. \$500,000 of the money received from the sale these licenses must be used by the Department to acquire public hunting access to inaccessible public land.

In the past two years we have not sold all of the 17,000 nonresident big game combination licenses, and it appears we will be undersold again this year. By lowering the fee, nonresidents who currently hunt in a wilderness area will purchase the reduced fee licenses, which will result in additional loss in revenue. SB 380 earmarks up to \$500,000 to an account that has a current balance of \$372,400. The Department has only been able to expend \$115,000 over the last three years on this program due to limited number of projects that could be accomplished. Finally, the license earmarks in SB 380 to acquire access to inaccessible public land and the general license account will defund the Upland Game Bird Habitat, Upland Game Bird Planting, Wildlife Habitat, Wildlife Habitat Trust Interest, Wildlife Habitat Trust, Hunting Access, and Search and Rescue programs, which receive earmarked funds from these B-10 licenses under current law. Currently with a surplus of nonresident big game combination licenses, the new licenses proposed by SB380 are not needed. Anyone who applies for a nonresident big game license can receive one. Until the demand for nonresident licenses exceeds the quota, SB 380 would provide nothing more than a restrictive, reduce priced license.

This is one of many bills that affect hunting and fishing license costs, structure, and fees, each of which is being addressed independently. HB 609, which passed the House and will be on 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading in the Senate soon, proposes a legislative interim study to look at incremental changes that have been made over time to all FWP licenses, fees, and license structure to determine the most effective and equitable system for hunters and anglers. This study provides a vehicle to evaluate the need for the licenses proposed by SB380 during the next interim.

The Department requests a "do not pass".

Thank you.